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RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0759  
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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN'S ELITE REACT DIFFERENTLY TO PRESIDENT  
MUSHARRAF'S PROPOSED KASHMIR SOLUTION

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) On December 4, Indian television network NDTV interviewed President Musharraf in Islamabad for an Indian audience. Although his remarks were reported widely in the international press the day after the interview, Pakistan's news media was slower in picking up the story. During the interview, Musharraf said that Pakistan would be willing to give up its claim on Kashmir if India agreed to allow for far-reaching self-governance for the region. NDTV reported his proposed solution as including four points: (1) no changes in the boundaries of Kashmir; (2) make borders and the line of control irrelevant; (3) staggered demilitarization; and (4) autonomy or self-governance with a joint supervision mechanism.

¶2. (C) Reaction to Musharraf's interview among the intellectual and political elite in Islamabad covered a broad spectrum, from hopeful to skeptical to resentful. An academic told PolAsst that Musharraf's suggestions are not much different than in the past, but his overture should be viewed as a wish to strengthen Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh among the hawkish circles of the Indian establishment to make progress. More than one politician viewed Musharraf's statement as a trial balloon to see what the Indian side would do next: "I personally do not give much importance to what Musharraf has said... I would not like to think that Musharraf will simply give up on the geographical territory of Kashmir," said one Embassy contact. Sardar Amjad Yousaf, Vice President of Musharraf's own ruling Pakistan Muslim League took a darker view. Yousaf said that Musharraf's previous diplomatic overtures regarding Kashmir were a failed attempt to get the West's support for Pakistan's position, and that Musharraf continues to try to make progress now regardless of where the "progress" will lead Pakistan. "I think his statements on the Kashmir issue portray him as a frustrated dictator," Yousaf said.

¶3. (C) The Kashmiris themselves seemed to resent the bargaining going on over their heads. Haji Rafiq Dar, spokesman of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, was clear

about his group's interests: "Now what is most important is that neither side should ignore the aspirations of the Kashmiri people... We take Musharraf's words as the beginning of a political process and that is about it." Sardar Khalid Ibrahim, President of Jammu Kashmir People's Party and AJK Legislative Assembly member, put it more bluntly: "The idea of joint supervision is absolutely absurd... we cannot and will not allow this."

¶4. (C) Note: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has not issued an official statement contextualizing Musharraf's remarks. On December 6, MFA spokeswoman Tasnim Aslam told the DCM that Musharraf broke no new ground with his remarks. If any headline should be made from Musharraf's interview, Aslam said, it should be Musharraf's call for flexibility from both sides to come to a solution. End Note.

¶5. (C) Comment: Musharraf's statements are broadly consistent with what he has said in the past. Nevertheless, his reaching out now reflects his continued commitment and his personal desire to reach some kind of solution on Kashmir. Thus far, his style of floating his ideas and thoughts in the media has not endeared him to domestic audience, his Indian interlocutors, or to Kashmiris. End Comment.  
CROCKER